Chamber meeting

South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce board meeting on Jan. 9 at 6:30pm at the Cantina restaurant on Emerald Bay Road.

Everyone welcome.

RAOK: Teaching her daughter to give at an early age

Heather Cade is going skiing at Sierra-at-Tahoe because she is the latest winner of *Lake Tahoe News'* Random Acts of Kindness promotion.



Maybe she'll be giving the award to her daughter – after all, Mykenzie is the one who donated her old toys to be used by kids who don't have as much as she has.

Random Acts of Kindness is *Lake Tahoe News'* way to start off the year on a positive note by encouraging kindness. Local businesses are supplying the rewards.

It's free and easy to participate. All you have to do is perform a Random Act of Kindness, witness one or be the recipient of an act. Then tell us about it via a comment at the bottom of this story.

Each day this month someone will be rewarded. You may post every day. Winners are picked randomly.

For more details about Random Acts of Kindness and the few rules associated with it, check out this story.

Nevada officials studying feds' ruling on online poker

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

The Nevada Attorney General's office has begun studying the U.S. Department of Justice's surprising new interpretation of online gambling to determine what effects it might have on the state.

What's certain is that the race to offer online poker play has begun among several states and that Nevada has a lead, thanks to last month's approval of new regulations.

But even more states are likely to jump in as well, leading to the prospect of different states providing games with different legal and regulatory standards and tax rates — exactly what the gaming industry didn't want.

The Justice Department since the George W. Bush administration had concluded that the federal Wire Act prohibited gambling over the Internet across state lines, and many industry leaders have lobbied for federal lawmakers to approve legislation legalizing, regulating and taxing online poker play.

But on Dec. 23, in response to inquiries from Illinois and New York on whether they could sell lottery tickets to out-of-state residents over the Internet, the department issued a letter saying the Wire Act applied "solely to sport-related

gambling activities in interstate and foreign commerce," leading most in the industry to conclude that online poker was allowable.

Now, many industry leaders are renewing their call for lawmakers to pass legislation regulating poker play to head off an expected rush of offshore companies introducing poker websites.

Read the whole story

Can Thin Mints be dethroned?

By Cara Kelly, Washington Post

The Christmas cookies are gone, the Hanukkah doughnuts have been eaten and millions of Americans have made New Year's resolutions to eat better. But in a few weeks, more sugary temptations will find their way into the office and onto adorable stands outside the grocery store.

That's right, Girl Scout cookie season is nearly upon us. And this year, to mark the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouting, a new cookie will make its debut. Meet Savannah Smiles, a bite-sized treat with a dusting of confectioner's sugar and a lemony kick. The name was inspired by the home of Girl Scout founder, Juliette Gordon Low .

Although it's doubtful the cheerily named confection will beat the perpetual front-runner, the Thin Mint, it stands a better shot at a top ranking than the last lemon-flavored snack.

Read the whole story

The art of selecting New Year's resolutions worth keeping

By Robert Schimmel

I am not given to making New Year's resolutions because they are usually too intimidating to fulfill and therefore create a failure mentality or become a joke. Taking stock along the way, making small adjustments inch by inch keeps me closer to the path I've chosen and less frustrated.

On the other hand I like the annual "big picture" review and assessment that Jan 1 inspires because there is hope and creative brainstorming that ensues. Therefore, gazing at 2011 in the arts' rearview mirror and into the looking glass of 2012, I'd like to offer a few thoughts.



Robert Schimmel

Kudos: Lakeview Commons had its problems, but is evolving into just what the South Shore needs to bookend and complement the diverse attractions of the Bijou to Ski Run area and the downtown casino corridor. The finishing touches and opening events in 2012 should gestate new visions for what can and should be done to individualize this extraordinary Lake and

landscape we're given. The Tahoe Arts and Design Academy at STHS is a fabulous addition broadening the creative panorama that our kids can investigate and our community utilize. On the Run at Ski Run continues to appropriate its personality and persevere to upgrade its look and uniqueness. All arts volunteer and membership organizations need to be congratulated and supported.

Challenges: With all the struggles South Tahoe has had developing new venues during the past five years specifically, I'd like to see our city and all affiliated bodies in process (like Caltrans, TRPA, etc.) wake up to the need for loosening the stranglehold of regulations that impede small business growth and "outside the box" creativity that is ultimately the only way it can distinguish itself from just another town. Letting go of the power trips and embracing what our community can do on its own will ultimately make the jobs of our now reduced city staff much easier and more productive. If the arts can't make and flaunt the arts, then what chance do we have of improving our national image? Old case in point is the failed convention center mural for Amgen. Regardless of the event's cancellation here, had the honest approach to this been to beautify the city by turning the arts community loose and supporting it, we and our visitors would have been enjoying some amazing artwork for at least the last 10 months at a pittance instead of a broken down gray wooden "wall". I know if the powers that be want something, it happens, like SnowGlobe, so let's use the same influence to encourage longer lasting, more community friendly economic endeavors, like other performance based fine art, year-round outdoor shows, a regional or national arts expo and/or plein air event, live/work studios (in vacant spaces?), more graffiti artists work, etc.

Personally: I will finally and anxiously be joining the iPhone generation courtesy of my daughter's hand-me-down 3G, my clutter will likely continue but with more organizational

elements to make it more efficacious (if that makes any sense!), painting is once again on my “to do” list as is a new website, red wine and dark chocolate aren’t going anywhere but “in and down”, and aging seems to be at the root of all my needed improvements, so I’m eliminating it.

Most of the successes I see come from sincere collaborations that aren’t burdened with mountainous regulations, suffocating bureaucracies or personal agendas. Hopefully, this year the developing Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan will become a new paradigm for just such large scale planning and implementation that unites passions and coalesces energy into successful actions for sustaining economic prosperity. Even on an individual level, each of us usually needs help at some point in any endeavor, so if we initiate and engage honestly those who can assist us and, in return, give back to them generously, all productivity and end results will be magnified appropriately.

On that note, having left out reams of roughage to cleanse the 2012 trough, may I leave you with the most difficult and important resolution of all: to let peace and loving faith reign and abide in your hearts and actions each and every day of 2012.

Robert Schimmel is a professional artist and teacher in South Lake Tahoe as well as host of “Lake Tahoe Art Scene” on KTHO radio on Thursdays at 5:15pm.

Tahoe publication celebrates its 30th year

The *Weekly* magazine is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2012 with an exhibit of 30 years of *Weekly* covers at North Tahoe Arts Center in Tahoe City through Feb. 27.

An Opening Reception is Jan. 13 from 5 to 7pm at the Arts Center, and everyone is invited to attend.

The exhibit will feature 30 years of covers, with one cover picked from every year of publication from its inception in 1982. Covers feature winter and summer recreation, local faces, local events and a great look at Tahoe and Truckee for the past 30 years.

The highlight of the exhibit is the first edition, which published on Feb. 18, 1982, as *North Tahoe Week*. The first edition was 12 pages and featured a photograph by Vance Fox of a skier cliff jumping near the horse trails in Squaw Valley.

The *Weekly* is celebrating its 30th year with a redesign of the magazine, debuting on Jan. 12, along with a special 30th anniversary edition on Feb. 9. There will be a 30th anniversary party on Feb. 11, location TBD, in which everyone will be invited to help celebrate the 30th anniversary.

For details, email editor@tahoethisweek.com.

Nuances of forest come alive

in guided Tahoe trail hike

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Someplace National Winter Trails Day lived up to its purpose – a free, guided snowshoe or cross country trek, with introductions to the sports for those who are unfamiliar with them.

In Tahoe, the North Shore event was canceled because of lack of snow and the South Shore event turned into a hike.

No snow didn't matter Saturday for those who bundled up to experience Van Sickle Bi-state Park – the only park in the country that crosses into two states.



Lindsay Gusses with the USFS, in green, leads an interpretive hike Jan. 3 through Van Sickle Bi-state Park. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The 120 people who preregistered and the nearly two dozen who signed up at the event that launched from the parking lot at Harrah's Lake Tahoe were divided into seven groups before they

headed uphill.

Holding up a three-pronged pine needle, Lindsay Gusses bends one needle down to make a Y as a way to get her group to remember the Jeffery pine is a yellow pine.

It was these little tidbits of information delivered in a fun way that kept the chilly two-mile trek entertaining.

The beauty, well, that needs no explanation. But sometimes it’s nice to know what you are looking at or how something came to be.

Gusses works for the U.S. Forest Service. Her job on Jan. 7 during this Tahoe Rim Trail Association sponsored event is to tell her charges about various aspects of the forest.

“A good reminder as we are walking through the forest is to use all of your senses,” Gusses says.

People are walking up to a Jeffery pine, putting their noses in the crooks. Butterscotch and vanilla fill their nostrils.

On a warmer day, with several of these trees near one another the aroma can permeate the air.

“Gentle Jeffery” is often the nickname for these conifers because their cones are gentle to the touch.

Some conifers – which are any cone-bearing tree – are prickly, even painful if grabbed tightly.

A short history lesson about the Comstock era explains why so many fir trees dot the landscape. They are drought resistant and shade tolerant, allowing them to propagate after the forest was clearcut to build the silver mines in Nevada.

White pines are more often found closer to Lake Tahoe, while red fir are farther up ski slopes.

“One way to tell the difference is the spacing of the

needles," Gusses says. White fir needles curve a bit, while red look more like a hockey stick.

Part way up the trail a cluster of South Tahoe High School students is ready to educate each group that comes by about using avalanche beacons and how to find someone who may be trapped. Leave No Trace is a component of the hike, with Plan and Prepare being one of the seven principles.

These students are part of the Generation Green Club, a collaboration between the school and U.S. Forest Service.

Tyler Myers, a junior at STHS, uses his beacon to find a transmitter that has been stuffed in a football and hidden behind a tree. The beeping gets louder as he gets closer. How far he is from the "victim" shows up on the device – though 20 meters is the farthest it reads.

"It doesn't give a depth, that's why we bring a probe," Myers explains.

Moving on, the group goes through part of the forest that was charred in summer 2002 during the Gondola Fire.

Gusses talks about the importance of fire when it comes to having a healthy forest. But she also imparts how it's incumbent upon everyone to prevent wildfires. After all, it was a smoker who tossed a cigarette butt out the Heavenly gondola that started that fire. Heavenly has since made it impossible for that to happen again.

"It doesn't take much to completely change the ecosystem," Gusses says.

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The Tahoe Rim Trail Association has free Trail Talks scheduled through May. For more information, go online.

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Fire district wants judge to block county from taking money for Incline residents

By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal

The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District is asking a judge to stop the county from taking district property tax revenues each month to pay for court-ordered tax refunds to Incline Village homeowners, saying the money is needed to run emergency services.

District lawyer Geno Menchetti of Incline Village filed a legal document on Friday seeking to block the county from taking $6.5 million in district funds – its share of $43 million in property tax refunds owed to Incline Village homeowners. District commissioners voted on Thursday to take the issue to court.

In the filing, Menchetti is asking Washoe District Judge Patrick Flanagan to order county Treasurer Tammi Davis to stop diverting property taxes from the district as those taxes are needed for fire and ambulance services.

In November, $689,055 or almost half the money collected by the treasurer was diverted to pay for the tax refunds.

If this continues, Menchetti wrote, the district would be unable to budget for the upcoming year or "at worst, be placed in a position of a severe financial crisis."

“It’s likely our fire district, our only emergency service here, might have to close a substation, cut service and personnel,” Menchetti said Friday after the filing.

Read the whole story

Mancuso places second in downhill

By USSA

BAD KLEINKIRCHHEIM, Austria – Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley stormed to second and led three Americans into the top 10 at the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill in Bad Kleinkirchheim on Saturday.

World Cup overall and downhill leader Lindsey Vonn of Vail survived a big mistake right out of the starting gate to finish fourth, missing the podium by a mere five hundredths. Reigning downhill World Champion Austrian Elisabeth Goergl of Austria won for her first World Cup downhill victory.

Mancuso scored her best downhill finish since winning World Cup Finals last March finishing second. She has now been on the World Cup podium for downhill, super G and giant slalom this season.

“It was very difficult and I was hoping for the win, but you had to hold on and fight. It was set pretty straight at the bottom, so you can go really fast, but you pay for it if you can’t hold the line,” Mancuso said. “The light and conditions were really tough. You have to make a lot of direction before the hill just drops away. You’re fighting it the whole way.”

Vonn also continues to lead the World Cup downhill standings.

Stacey Cook of Truckee was eighth, Julia Ford 22, Laurenne Ross 23 and Alice McKennis 26, for six Americans in the top 30.

Vegans muscle their way into bodybuilding

By Mary Pilon, New York Times

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – Jimi Sitko gets up at 4 most mornings, works out two to four hours a day and can bench-press nearly twice his weight. He has a shaved head and a brightly colored tattoo on his left arm, and he can easily be mistaken for a Marine separated from his platoon.

His apartment is filled with medals and trophies from bodybuilding competitions, snapshots of his tanned, rippled physique in full flex. His uniform is an assortment of sweat pants and hoodies, which he occasionally lifts when his abs look particularly fierce.

But most surprising is what is inside Sitko's stomach: tofu, fresh greens and plant-based protein powder.

Sitko is among a niche community of vegan bodybuilders.

As the popularity of veganism has spread in recent years – fueled in part by a flurry of food-focused documentaries like "Super Size Me," "Food, Inc." and "Forks Over Knives" – its imprint can be seen in industries like publishing (VegNews)

and fashion (hemp tote bags).

It has even entered bodybuilding, perceived by many as a population of vein-popping men and women thriving off meat and artificial enhancements. Competitors like Sitko are forging a distinctive subculture of antibeef beefcakes who hope to change more of their competitors' eating habits.

As a vegan, Sitko, 29, does not eat meat, dairy or, he said, "anything else that comes from an animal." As a bodybuilder, he spends hours at the gym lifting barbells, running on a treadmill and sculpturing his 5-foot-11, 180-pound body. Then he spray-tans and parades before a panel of judges in a posing suit, known in the sport as a mankini. He is preparing for a competition in March.

Read the whole story